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## JOURNALISTIC REMUNERATION.

### THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PICTURE.

By ERNEST PHILLIPS,  
Author of *How to become a Journalist*.

It is to be feared that visions conjured up by the article on 'Journalistic Remuneration' in a recent issue may, if the other side of the picture be not considered, disturb the mental perspective of those aspiring 'middle-class authors'—as the writer termed them—and contributors to the periodic press who are trying, very often with but indifferent success, to secure a livelihood by means of their pens. The writer, at the very outset, found an excuse for his interesting article in the statement that in the 'so-called hand-books' to the press the question of remuneration was not so fully discussed as its importance demanded. As the author of one of those hand-books, the present writer may be permitted to say that he was at particular pains to place before literary aspirants a full and accurate statement of journalistic remuneration. In the main, the conclusion arrived at—and the present writer, it may be pointed out, is a journalist and author himself—was that journalism, as a profession, was sadly under-paid. The author of the article on 'Journalistic Remuneration' quotes Mr James Payn, but Mr Payn has ever been one of the first to maintain that the gains of a journalistic or literary life are far and away below those which may be acquired by a career devoted to law, commerce, medicine, or even the minor branches of trade. In the higher walks of journalism, as in the higher walks of literature, there are many plums; but it has to be confessed that on the other hand there are many, very many, journalists, clever and educated, who are slaving away at wages little or nothing in advance of those earned by a skilful mechanic, and immeasurably below the profits of the successful retail tradesman.

The author of 'Journalistic Remuneration,' however, was more concerned with the earnings of those who devote themselves to what is known as 'free-lance' work, rather than with the salaries of

those who are members of the permanent staffs of the daily, weekly, and monthly organs of the press. It is because of this very fact that his teaching is unsound, and the inference to be drawn from his article is unsafe as a guide to would-be writers. In effect, he contends that it is an easy matter for a 'free-lance' to make his £4 or £5 a week by miscellaneous contributions to the press, 'untrammelled by any of the drawbacks of an office life.' Applied to a few individuals this may be, and is, correct; as a general statement it is at once unfounded and misleading. Heaven knows that there is little need to print incentives to intelligent youths to forsake their occupations and seek to carve out for themselves a name with no other means than their pens. Only recently the writer of these lines received a letter from a youth who had mastered shorthand, and had had the glory of seeing himself in print in *Tit-Bits*. Fired by this success, he craved for a literary life, and asked in his letter for information as to how to proceed, on arriving at London, to make a living as a penny-a-liner and occasional contributor to journalism. It is going too far to say that it would be impossible for a country youth to come up to London and succeed where so many natives find it hard to keep afloat—there are instances enough to show that the thing is not impossible. But, nevertheless, the chances were ninety-nine to one against that infatuated youth, whose delusive hopes had doubtless been based upon the alluring accounts, written by irresponsible authors, of the shower of golden guineas waiting to fall at the feet of every one who takes up the pen and seeks to place himself in touch with the reading public. Visions of this description are vain; hopes founded upon them crumble to ashes like Dead Sea fruit, and he who, lacking influence and downright genius, has embarked upon a journalistic or literary career, 'untrammelled by any of the drawbacks of an office life,' will ere long find that he has been grievously disappointed, and that neither editors nor public care for the message he so fondly imagined the world was waiting for.

There is no doubt that 'free-lance' work pays. At no time was there a wider field offered to the energies and abilities of writers. This is due, of course, to the enormous multiplication of newspapers and magazines. Many of these have their permanent staffs, who write all that is requisite and necessary; others are very largely dependent upon outside contributions, and it is to these productions, more than to the ordinary newspapers, that the attention of 'free-lance' writers is directed. But to say or to suggest that it is comparatively easy to earn a 'snug little income' solely by this class of work is to say that which is not correct in the great majority of cases. The greater number of the articles from outside which are accepted by these periodicals are from the pens of writers who have appointments of some kind to fall back upon as a means of livelihood, and who employ their spare time in the compilation of articles suitable for the different publications to whose columns they endeavour to obtain admittance. This is the general state of affairs; the exceptions—writers who depend solely upon these special articles, and have no fixed situation—are few in number. And furthermore, even in those cases, it very often happens that they have secured such a footing in certain offices that their contributions there are invariably accepted, so that to all intents and purposes they may regard their work for those particular journals as a permanency. What is meant by this may be illustrated by an incident which occurred to the present writer. He had made many attempts to place an article with a certain magazine, but his manuscripts were always returned with the formula, 'declined with thanks.' Finally, the editor was good enough to send him a brief note with a returned article. It was to the effect that it was very little use sending him articles, as the editor had secured a circle of contributors upon whom he could rely for all that was requisite to fill his paper. This is proof that an outside writer, not included in these circles—which exist in the case of nearly all newspapers—has little chance of success; certainly he has small hope of making a living out of his contributions, when they are declined for such a reason!

The writer has a good connection with many publications, but he would be very loth to throw up a permanent situation and put his trust in the unfaultering generosity of their editors. There are too many disappointments in life to justify one in willingly creating another for one's self. Manuscripts are kept a month and returned—out of date. Sometimes they are never returned at all. Sometimes the ideas are stolen and worked up differently, the unlucky author receiving his 'copy' back, and having the mortification of seeing, a few weeks later, an article which he knows has been based upon his own work. In the case of high-class and respectable papers and magazines, such proceedings are, of course, unknown; but with many of the innumerable trashy publications which burst into life amid a great blaze of advertisements, and signalise their birth by a loud appeal to authors, many shady things are done ere they descend to their early graves, 'unhonoured and unsung'!

One of the greatest grievances contributors have against some editors is the unduly and unnecessarily long detention of their articles when they

are not accepted. The writer remembers when President Carnot was assassinated a couple of years ago, writing an article dealing with the violent deaths of great rulers, in all times and climes. The preparation of that article involved a week's research and reading. It was sent off to a well-known paper. Three weeks passed by, and as nothing had been heard of it, a gentle reminder was despatched after it. To that even there was no answer, but four weeks later the article was returned, with the customary intimation that it was very regretfully declined with thanks! Thus the article had been kept until President Carnot had been all but forgotten, and until his assassination had passed into history. This occurs in scores of cases, and is one great drawback to a man's earning his living by this class of writing. If an article of topical interest were returned, say, in a day or two, the author would have a chance of placing it elsewhere; as things are, it is shelved until its marketable value has departed. Periodicals of the 'bits' type are the greatest sinners in this respect.

And it must be remembered that amongst the thousands of papers and periodicals there are many that struggle into life and maintain a precarious existence without a very consistent regard to the maxim that strict honesty is the best policy. Sometimes the author will find that his manuscript is 'lost'—at least so he may be told when he appeals for its return after it has been in the office perhaps a month. If the contributor keeps his eye upon that journal, it may not be long before he discovers in its columns a garbled and perhaps partly rewritten version of his own article. But what can he do? He kept no copy of his manuscript, and the bare denial, and the burning of the manuscript, are all that are needed to sweep away whatever case he may fancy he has. It has happened that articles have been used as letters—that is to say, the headline has been struck out, and the matter published as a 'letter to the editor.' If the contributor makes a noise, he may receive a letter telling him it was an error, and offering him perhaps five shillings as payment, on the ground that the matter would not have been used if it had been known that payment was expected. Another device of the 'shady' type of publications is for the so-called editor to return an article, informing the sender that he was just contemplating writing one himself on that particular subject! When the article does appear, its resemblance to the one rejected may be striking to a degree.

It will be seen, therefore, that the occasional contributor has much to contend against; and he who cuts himself adrift from office life, and seeks to make a living as a 'free lance' will find, unless he has influence and connections, that he has taken a step which oftener leads to adversity and poverty than to prosperity and affluence. Journalism is overcrowded. To enter the law, medicine, divinity, and almost all other callings, a man has to spend years in training, and at the end of that period has to face a stiff examination. In journalism and literature there are neither of these tests. If a man can write that which will interest, entertain, or instruct the world, he has a chance of finding an avenue for placing his lucubrations in the hands of the reading public. But to argue from this that a writer with neither

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influence nor connection, who trusts implicitly in his pen, is certain of succeeding as a 'free lance' is not justified by the good fortune of the few; success in this department must by no means be regarded as the normal reward of every contributor to the press.

## MY LORD DUKE.\*

### CHAPTER XII.—THE WRONG MAN.

THE Duke had proceeded to his hut with the slow and slouching gait of a man bemused; yet his sinews were like the strings of a lute, and there was an inordinately keen edge to his every sense. He heard the deer cropping the grass far behind him; and he counted the very reverberations of the stable clock striking a half-hour in the still air. It was the half-hour after midnight. The moon still slanted among the pines, and Jack followed his own shadow, with his beard played against his shirt-front, until within a few yards of his hut. Then he looked quickly up and about. But the hut was obviously intact; there was the moon twinkling on the padlock of which the key was in his pocket; and Jack returned instantly to his examination of the ground.

He was a very old bushman; he had a black-fellow's eye for a footprint, and he had struck a trail here which he knew to be recent and not his own. He followed it to the padlocked door, and round the hut and back to the door. He found the two heel-marks where the man had sat down there to think some matter over. Then he took out his key and went within, but left the door wide open; and while his back was still turned to it, for he could not find his matches, there was a slight noise there, and the moon's influx was stemmed by a man's body.

'Good-morning, Hunt,' said Jack, without turning round.

The tone, no less than the words, took the intruder all aback. He had planned a pretty surprise, only to receive a prettier for his pains.

'How do you know it's me?' he said aghast.

'By your voice,' was the reply; and the matches were found at last.

'But before that?'

'I expected you. Why didn't you go on sitting there with your back to the door?'

'You saw me!' cried Hunt, coming in.

'I saw your tracks. Hullo! Be good enough to step outside again.'

'I've come to talk to you'—

'Quite so; but we'll talk outside.'

And Hunt had to go with what grace he might. Jack followed with a couple of camp-stools, pulled the door to, sat down on one of the stools, and motioned Hunt to the other. The great smooth face shook slowly in reply; and the moonlight showed a bulbous bruise between the eyes, which made its author frown and feel at fault.

'Yes, you may look!' said Hunt, through the gap in his set teeth which was a piece of the same handiwork. 'You hit hard enough, but I can hit

harder where it hurts more. A fine duke you are! Oh yes; double your fists again—do. But I'll bet you won't hit me this time; there's no one looking on!'

'Don't be too sure, my boy,' replied Jack. 'Don't you make any mistake!'

Hunt stuck a foot upon his camp-stool, and leaned forward over his knee.

'You recollect why you struck me to-night?'

'Perfectly.'

'Well, I deserved it—for being such a fool as to say what I had to say at a time like that. It was the drink said it, not me; I apologise again for saying it there, I apologise to you and me too. I was keeping it to say here.'

'Out with it,' said Jack, who to his own astonishment was preserving a perfect calm. And as he spoke he began to fill a pipe that he had brought out with the matches.

'One thing at a time,' said Hunt, producing a greasy bank-book. 'I'll out with this first. You may have heard that the old Duke had a kind of weakness for my folks?'

'I have heard something of the sort.'

'Then I'll trouble you to run your eye over this here passbook. It belongs to my old dad. It'll show you his account with the London and Provincial Bank at Devenholme. It's a small account. This here book goes back over ten years, and there's some blank leaves yet. But look at it for yourself; keep your eye on the left-hand page from first to last: and you'll see what you'll see.'

Jack did so; and what he saw on every left-hand page was this: 'per Maitland, £50.' There were other entries, 'by cheque' and 'by cash,' but they were few and small. Clearly Maitland was the backbone of the account. And a closer inspection revealed the further fact that his name appeared punctually every quarter, and always in connection with the sum of fifty pounds received.

'Ever heard of Maitland, Hollis, Cripps, & Company?' inquired Hunt.

Jack started; so this was the Maitland. 'They are my solicitors,' he said.

'They were the old Duke's too,' replied Hunt. 'Now have a look at the other side of the account. You know the Lower Farm; then look and see what we pay for the rent.'

'I know the figure,' said Jack, handing back the bank-book. 'It is half the value.'

'Less than half—though I say it! And what does all this mean—two hundred a year paid up without fail by Maitland, Hollis, Cripps, & Co., and the Lower Farm very near rent-free? It means,' said Hunt, leaning forward with an evil gleam on either side of his angry brow—'it means that something's bought of us as doesn't appear! You can guess what for yourself. Our silence! Two hundred a year, and the Lower Farm at a nominal rent, all for keeping a solitary secret!'

'Then I should advise you to go on keeping it,' said Jack, with cool point; yet for all his nonchalance his heart was in flutter enough now; for he knew what was coming, and he was idly wondering how much or how little it surprised him.

'All very fine,' he heard Hunt saying—a long way off as it seemed to him—whereas he was really bending farther forward than before. 'All

very fine! But what if this secret has improved in value with keeping? Improved, did I say? Lord's truth, it's gone up a thousand per cent. in the last few weeks; and who do you suppose sent it up? Why, you! I'll tell you how. I dessay you can guess; still I'll tell you, then there'll be no mistakes. You've heard things of your father? You know the sort he was? You won't knock me down again for mentioning it, will you? I thought not! Well, when the Red Marquis, as they used to call him, was a young man about the house here, my old dad was in the stables; and my old dad's young sister was the Duchess's own maid—a slapping fine girl, they tell me, but she was dead before I can remember. Well, and something happened; something often does. But this was something choice. Guess what!

'He married her.'

'He did. He married her at the parish church of Chelsea, in the name of Augustus William Greville Maske, his real name all but the title; still, he married the girl.'

'Quite right, too!'

'Oh, quite right, was it? Stop a bit. You were born in 1855. You told me so yourself; you may remember the time, and you stake your life I don't forget it. It was the sweetest music I ever heard, was that there date! Shall I tell you why? Why, because them two—the Red Marquis and his mother's maid—were married on October 22d, 1853.'

'Well?'

Hunt took out a handful of the cigars which had been provided for all comers in the evening; he had filled his pockets with them; and now he selected one by the light of the setting moon, and lit it deliberately. Then he puffed a mouthful of smoke in Jack's direction, and grinned.

"Well," says you; and you may well "well!" For the Red Marquis deserted his wife and went out to Australia before he'd been married a month. And out there he married again. *But you were five years old, my fine fellow, before his first wife died and was buried in this here parish!* You can look at her tombstone for yourself. She died and was buried as Eliza Hunt; and just that much was worth two hundred a year to us for good and all; because, you see, I'm sorry to say she never had a child.'

Both in substance and in tone this last statement was the most convincing of all. Here was an insolent exultation tempered by a still more insolent regret. And the very incompleteness of the triumph engraved it the deeper with the stamp of harsh reality.

Jack saw his position steadily in all its bearings. He was nobody. A little time ago he had stepped into Claude's shoes, but now Claude would step into his. Well, thank God that it was Claude! And yet—and yet—that saving fact made facts of all the rest.

'I've no doubt your yarn is quite true,' said Jack, still in a tone that amazed himself. 'But of course you have some proofs on paper?'

'Plenty.'

'Then why couldn't you come out with all this before?'

Hunt gave so broad a grin that a volume of smoke escaped haphazard from his gaping mouth.

'You'd punished me,' he said, admiring the red end of his cigar; 'I'd got you to punish in your

turn, and with interest. So I gave you time to get to like the old country in general, and this here spot in particular; to say nothing of coming the Duke; I meant that to grow on you too, I hope as I gave you time enough? This here hut don't look altogether like it, you know!'

Jack's right hand was caressing the loaded revolver in the breast-pocket of his dress-coat; it was the cold, solid power of the little living weapon that kept the man himself cool and strong in his extremity.

'Quite fair,' he remarked. 'Any other reason?'

'Why, certainly.'

'What was that?'

'Well, you see, it's like this'—and Hunt dropped his insolence for a confidential tone far harder to brook. 'It's like this,' he repeated, plumping down on the camp-stool in front of Jack: 'there's nobody knows of that there marriage but us Hunts. We've kept it a dead secret for nearly forty years, and we don't want to let it out now. But, as I say, the secret's gone up in value. Surely it's worth more than two hundred a year to you? You don't want to be knocked sideways by that there Claude Lafont, do you? Yet he's the next man in. You'd never let yourself be chucked out by a chap like that?'

'That's my business. What's your price?'

'Two thousand.'

'A year?'

'Two thousand a year. Come, it's worth that to you if it's worth a penny-piece. Think of your income!'

'Think of yours. Two hundred on condition you kept a single secret! That was the condition, wasn't it?'

'Well?'

'You've let the secret out, you cur!' cried Jack, jumping to his feet. 'And you've lost your income by it for good and all. Two thousand! You'll never see another two hundred. What! did you take me for a dirty skunk like yourself? Do you think I got in this position through my own fault or of my own accord? Do you think I'm so sweet on it as to sit tight at the mercy of a thing like you? Not me! What you've told me to-night the real Duke and his lawyers shall hear to-morrow; and think yourself lucky if you aren't run in for your shot at a damnable conspiracy! Did you really suppose I cared as much as all that? Do you think—oh! for God's sake, clear out, man, before I do you any more damage!'

'Oh, you're good at that,' said Hunt, through the hole in his teeth. He had risen, and now he withdrew a few paces. 'You're not bad with your fists, you fool, but I've come prepared for you this time!' and he drew a knife; but the revolver covered him next instant.

'And I for you,' retorted Jack. 'I give you five seconds to clear out in. One—two—'

'My God, are there such fools!—'

'Three—four!—'

The man was gone. At a safer range he stopped again to threaten and gloat, to curse and to coax alternately. But Jack took no more notice; he turned into the hut, flung the pistol on the table, and stood motionless until the railing died away. Yet he had heeded never a word of it, but was rather reminded that it had been by its very



cessation, as one notes the stopping of a clock. It made him look out once more, however; and, looking, he saw the last of Matthew Hunt in the moonlit spaces among the pines. His retreating steps died slowly away. The snapping of a twig was just audible a little after. And then in the mellow distance the stable-clock chimed and struck one; and again Jack found himself keeping an imaginary count of the reverberations until all was still.

He stood at the door a moment longer. The feathered barbs of the pine-trees were drawn in ink upon a starry slate. The night was as mild and clear and silent as many a one in the Riverina itself; and Jack tried to think himself there and to regard this English summer as the bushman's dream that he had so often imagined it here in his model bush hut. But his imagination was very stubborn to-night. The stately home which was not his rose in his mind's eye between him and the stars; once more he saw it illumined in a flash from spire to terrace; once more the portico columns marched forward as one man, while the six eagles of the ancient house flew out in the tympanum above; and though a purring arose from his feet, and something soft and warm rubbed kindly against his shins, he could no longer forget where he was and who he was not. He was not the Duke. He was the wrong man after all. And the hut that he had built and inhabited, as a protest against all this grandeur, was a monument of irony such as the hand of man had never reared in all the world before.

The wrong man! He flung himself upon the elaborately rude bed to grapple with those three words until he might grasp what they meant to himself. And as he lay, his little cat leaped softly up and purred upon his heart, as if it knew the aching need there of a sympathy beyond the reach of words.

Only one aspect of his case came home to him now, but that was its worst aspect. The life he was to lose mattered little after all. He might miss it more than he had once thought; it was probable he would but truly appreciate it when it was a life of the past, as is the way of a man. Yet even that could be borne. The losing of the girl was different and a million times worse. But lose her he must; for what was he now? Instead of a Duke a nobody; not even a decently-born peasant; a nameless husk of humanity, a derelict, a nonentity, the natural son of a notorious rake. Must he go back then to the bush, and back alone? Must he put himself beyond the reach of soft words and softer eyes for ever, and ever, and ever? He could feel again her little hand within his arm; and it was worse a hundredfold than the vision of the Towers lit from end to end by the light of a bursting rocket. Would not the grave itself—

Wait!

There was the pistol on the table. The pale light lay along the barrel. Jack held his breath and lay gazing at the faint gleam until it grew into a blinding sun that scorched him to the soul. And he hardly knew what he had done when Claude Lafont found him wandering outside with the hot pistol still in his hand.

Jack looked upon the breathless poet with dull eyes that slowly brightened; then he pressed the

spring, shot out the empty cartridges, blew through the hollow chambers, and handed the revolver back to Claude.

'I've no more use for it. I'm much obliged to you. No, I've done no damage with it; that's just the point. I was emptying it for safety's sake. I'm so sorry you heard. I—I *did* think of emptying it—through my own head.'

'In Heaven's name, why?'

'Only for a moment, though. It would have been a poor trick after all. Still I had to empty it first and see that afterwards.'

'But why? What on earth has happened?'

'I'm not the man after all.'

'What man?'

'The Duke of St Osmund's.'

And Claude was made to hear everything before he was allowed the free expression of his astonishment and incredulity. Then he laughed. His incredulity remained.

'My dear fellow,' he cried, 'there's not a word of truth in the whole story. It's one colossal fraud. Hunt's a blackguard. I wouldn't believe his oath in a court of justice.'

'What about the bank-book?'

'A fraud within a fraud!'

'Not it. I'll answer for that. Oh no; we could have inquired at the bank. Hunt's a blackguard, but no fool. And you know what my father was; from all accounts he wasn't the man to think twice about a little job like bigamy.'

'I wouldn't say that; few men of our sort would be so reckless in such a matter,' declared the poet. 'Now, from all I know of him, I should have said it was most inconsistent with his character to marry the girl at all. Everything but that! And surely it's quite possible to explain even that two hundred a year without swallowing such a camel as downright bigamy. My grandfather was a sort of puritanical monomaniac; even in the days of his mental vigour, I can remember him as a sterner moralist than any of one's schoolmasters or college dons. Then, too, he was morbidly sensitive about the family failings and traditions, and painfully anxious to improve the tone of our house. Bear that in mind, and conceive as gross a scandal as you like—but not bigamy. And do you mean to tell me that a man like my grandfather would have thought two hundred a year for all time too much to pay for hushing such a thing up for ever? Not he—not he!' There fell a heavy hand upon Claude's back.

'Claude, old boy, I always said you were a genius. Do you know, I never thought of that?'

'It's obvious; besides, there's the Eliza Hunt on the gravestone; I've seen it myself. But look here; I'll tell you what I'll do.'

'What, old man?'

'I'll run up to town to-morrow and see Maitland, Hollis, Cripps, & Co. about the whole matter. They've paid the money; they are the men to know all about it. Stop a moment! Hunt was clever enough to have an exact date for the marriage. What was it again?'

'October 22d, 1853.'

'I think he said Chelsea parish church?'

'He did.'

Claude scribbled a note of each point on his shirt-cuff.

'That's all I want,' said he. 'I'll run up by the first train, and back by the last. Meanwhile, take my word for it, you're as safe as the Queen upon her throne!'

'And you?' said Jack.

'Oh, never mind me; I'm very well as I am.'

Claude was fully conscious of his semi-heroic attitude; indeed he enjoyed it, as he had enjoyed many a less inevitable pose in his day. But that he could not help; and Jack was perhaps the last person in the world to probe beneath the surface of a kind action. His great hand found Claude's, and his deep voice quivered with emotion.

'I don't know how it is,' he faltered, 'but this thing has got at me more than I meant it to. Hark at that! Three o'clock; it'll be light before we know where we are; you won't leave a fellow till it is, will you? I'm in a funk! I've got to believe the worst till I know otherwise—that's all about it. The day I shan't mind tackling by myself, but for Heaven's sake don't go and leave me to-night. You've got to go in the morning; stop the rest of the night out here with me. You shall have the bunk and I'll doss down on the floor. I'll light the fire and brew a billy of tea this minute if only you'll stay with me now. Didn't you once say you'd have hold of my sleeve? And so you have had, old man, so you have had; only now's your time—more than ever.'

Claude was deeply moved by the spectacle of a stronger man than himself so stricken in every nerve. He looked very compassionately upon the eager open face. There were a few gray hairs about either temple, but in the faint starlight they looked perfectly white; and there were crow's-feet under the eyes that seemed to have escaped his attention till now. He consented to remain on one condition: he must go back and put out the lights and close the windows in the Poet's Corner. So Jack went with him; and those lights were the only sign of life in all the vast, dark expanse of ancient masonry, that still belonged to one of them, though they knew not now to which. It was this thought, perhaps, that kept both men silent on the terrace when the lights had been put out and the windows shut. Then Jack ran his arm affectionately through that of Claude, and together they turned their backs upon those debatable stones.

## HOW RUSSIA AMUSES ITSELF.

By FRED WHISHAW,  
Author of *Out of Doors in Teatland*, &c.

IF I were asked to state what a Russian schoolboy does with his spare time after working hours are over, I should be much puzzled what to say.

Unfortunately young Russia has not the faintest glimmering of knowledge of the practice or even of the existence of such things as football, cricket, fives, rackets, golf, athletic sports, hockey, or any other of the numerous pastimes which play so important a part in the life of every schoolboy in this merry land of England. Therefore there is no question, for him, of staying behind at the school premises after working hours, in order to take part in any game. He goes home; that

much is certain; most of his time is loafed away—that, too, is beyond question. He may skate a little, perhaps, in the winter, if he happens to live near a skating ground, but he will not go far for it; and in the summer, which is holiday time for him from June till September, he walks up and down the village street clothed in white calico garments, or plays cup and ball in the garden; fishes a little, perhaps, in the river or pond if there happen to be one, and lazies his time away without exertion. Of late years 'lorteneece,' as lawn-tennis is called in the Tsar's country, has been slightly attempted; but it is not really liked: too many balls are lost and the rules of the game have never yet been thoroughly grasped. A quartette of men will occasionally rig up their net, which they raise to about the height of a foot and a half, and play a species of battledore and shuttle-cock over it until the balls disappear; but it is scarcely tennis. As a matter of fact a Russian generally rushes at the ball and misses it; on the rare occasions when he strikes the object, he does so with so much energy that the ball, unless stopped by the adversary's eye, or his partner's, disappears for ever into 'the blue.' Croquet is a mild favourite, too; but it is played very languidly and unscientifically. Well do I remember a scene at the custom-house some years—a good many years, I fear—ago! I was a schoolboy at the time, and had arrived from England in order to spend the summer holidays in Russia. Among my impedimenta was a box of croquet paraphernalia which I had been commissioned to bring out for an English resident. At that time the game was as yet unknown to the country, and the custom-house authorities on opening the box retreated in horror and alarm when they beheld its awe-inspiring contents. Instruments of assault, bombs, mysterious weapons of every kind were contained in that awful box—not one of them would go near it! Amid exclamations of warning and horror, I drew forth one of the bombs and placed it upon the ground; then a second; to the accompaniment of cries of terror and consternation I took from the case a terrible weapon (known to croquet players as a mallet), and to the inexpressible alarm of all present I commenced a little exhibition-game of croquet upon the floor of the custom-house, in order to demonstrate the uses of the various implements. As the hoops could not well be utilised on the wooden boards, those innocent articles were gravely suspected. I believe the officials took them to be boomerangs of a novel and peculiar description, and the whole box was consequently detained for further and fuller investigation. I believe that they sunk it in deep water and sent down a scientifically-disposed diver to inspect it in safety. My friends got their croquet-set eventually, but the balls bore marks of careful testing; those officials had felt sure they were bombs, and had done their very best to convict them of containing dynamite.

Most gardens in Russian country houses contain a swing, a rotting horizontal bar for the gymnastically (and suicidally) inclined, and a giant-stride.

Occasionally there is a flower-bed in the centre, in which our dear old British friend, the rhubarb, monopolises the space, and makes a good show as an ornamental plant; for he is not known in that benighted country as a comestible, though, of course, children are acquainted with and hate him in his medicinal capacity. Besides the swings and the rhubarb, there are sand or gravel paths; and built out over the dusty road is an open summer-house, wherein the Muscovitish householder and his ladies love to sit and sip their tea for the greater part of each day—this being their acme of happiness. The dust may lie half-an-inch thick over the surface of their tea and bread and butter, but this does not detract from the delights of the fascinating occupation.

I should point out that in all I have said above, I refer not so much to the highest or to the lowest classes of Russian society, as to that middle stratum to which belong the families of the *Chinovnik*, of the infantry officer, or the well-to-do merchant. The aristocracy amuse themselves very much in the same way as our own. They shoot, they loaf and play cards in their clubs, they butcher pigeons out of traps, they have their race-meetings, they dance much and well; some have yachts of their own. Many of them keep English grooms, and their English—when they speak it—for this reason snacks somewhat of the stable, though they are not usually aware that this is the case. If a Russian aristocrat has succeeded in making himself look like an Englishman, and behaves like one, he is happy. I have known Russians who have made most excellent Englishmen, and should be glad to know more such.

Of winter sports—in which, however, but a small minority of the Russian youth care to take part—there are skating, ice-yachting, snow-shoeing, and ice-hilling. The skating ought, naturally, to be very good in Russia. As a matter of fact the ice is generally dead and lacking in that elasticity and spring which is characteristic of our English ice. It is too thick for elasticity, though the surface is beautifully kept and scientifically treated with a view to skating wherever a space is flooded or an acre or two of the Neva's broad bosom is reclaimed to make a skating ground. Some of the Russian amateurs skate marvellously, as also do many of the English and other foreign residents. Ice-yachting is confined almost entirely to these latter, the natives not having as yet awakened to the merits of this fine pastime. Ice-hilling, however, at fair-time—that is, during the carnival week preceding the 'long fast' or Lent—is much practised by the people. This is a kind of cross between the switchback and tobogganing, and is an exceedingly popular amusement among the English residents of St Petersburg, who support an Ice Hill Club of their own and repair to it weekly during the winter in order to amuse themselves by diving headlong adown the ice slopes, and to be amused by the attempts of novices to follow their example. I may assure my readers that ice-hilling is at once the most awe-inspiring to beginners, and the most charming of all sports to the expert that the mind of man can imagine. Snow-shoeing, again, is a fine and healthful recreation; it is the 'ski'-running of Norway, and is beloved and much

practised by all Englishmen who are fortunate enough to be introduced to its fascinations. It is too difficult and requires too much exertion, however, for young Russia, and that indolent individual, in consequence, rarely dons the snow-shoe. As I may perhaps describe both this pastime and the fierce joy of the ice-hills more fully in a subsequent paper, I shall merely state here that each of these is a pastime worthy of the gods, and one that would be immensely popular in England if there were only snow enough and frost enough to permit of its practice there.

The Russians are a theatre-loving people, and the acting must be very good to please their critical taste. Many of the theatres are 'imperial,' that is, the state 'pays the piper' if the receipts of the theatre so protected do not balance the expenditure. In paying for good artists, whether operatic or dramatic, the Russians are most lavish, and the Imperial Italian Opera must have been a source of considerable expense to the authorities in the days of its state endowment. I believe this branch of theatrical entertainment has now, however, deteriorated into a private enterprise.

Nearly every Russian is a natural musician, and can not only sing in tune, but can take a part 'by ear.' The man with the *balaleika* or *garmonka* is always sure of an admiring audience, whether in town or village; and there is not a tiny hamlet in the empire but resolves itself, on holidays, into a pair of choral societies—one for male and one for female voices—which either parade up and down the village street, singing, without, of course, either conductor or accompaniment, or sit in rows upon the benches outside the huts, occupied in a similar manner.

Occasionally, but very rarely, you may see a party of Russian children, or young men and women, playing, in the open air, at one of two games. The first is a variant of 'prisoner's base;' the other is a species of ninepins, or skittles, played with a group of uprights at which short, thick clubs are thrown. The Russian youth—those who are energetic enough to practise the game—sometimes attain considerable proficiency with these grim little weapons, and make wonderful shots at a distance of some thirty yards or so. But while the Russian or any other youth is studying the art of projecting the missiles, which are quite heavy enough to break a head or a shin if the proprietor happened to be 'knocking around' within a short walk, it is as well to take up one's abode in an adjoining parish and to get behind a good substantial building, say a church, for the game-playing Russian is erratic to a fault in the early stages of his initiation into the mysteries of any kind of pastime requiring skill.

As for the middle-class Russian sportsman, he forms a class by himself, and is a very original person indeed, unless taught the delights of the chase by an Englishman. In his eyes the be-all and end-all of a true sportsman is to purchase the orthodox equipment of green-trimmed coat, Tyrolese hat, and long boots, and to pay his subscription to a shooting club. He rarely discharges a gun; the rascally thing kicks, he finds; and the birds *will* fly before he can point his weapon at them as they crouch in the heather at his feet; of course he is not such a fool as to fire after they are up and away. As a rule, how-

ever, he goes no farther afield than the card-table of the club-house. Why should he? He has bought all the clothes; what more does a man need to be a sportsman? I cannot honestly affirm that I ever saw one of these good fellows actually fire off his gun; for whenever I have been informed that such an event is about to take place I have always done my best to place two or three good miles, or a village or two, between myself and the Muscovitish 'sportsman.'

## THE TAPESTRIES OF ALTRANA.

### CHAPTER II.

His perspicacity was not at fault, although his suspicions were appeased, when, a quarter of an hour afterwards, he saw Don Tomás pass up the street carrying the keys in his hand, but alone and unaccompanied by the now (to Tío José) odious stranger. If he could have watched what passed when Don Tomás had let himself into the church and carefully relocked the doors, he would at once have realised that his vague suspicions were but too well founded. When the priest found himself alone and the heavy door barred against all intrusion, he mopped his brow with his cotton handkerchief. From whatever motive, he had expected opposition from his sacristan. Then he stole softly across the church. He lifted his hat, and made the usual genuflections before the high altar. As he moved towards the door, his eye was caught by the life-size figure of a Christ which hung on the wall in front of him. It was generally concealed by a curtain, but to-day by some chance it had been left undrawn. It was one of those tremendous representations of the Passion in which the Catholic Church of Spain displays all its genius, all its startling realism, all its powers and terrors, and all its tenderness. It would have been difficult for even an indifferent spectator to confront this tall, pale figure with its agonised and livid face and bleeding feet without an emotion of some sort, of terror, awe, compassion—it may be, even of disgust—piercing through the blankness of his soul. To those who gazed on it under the influence of strong feeling, it seemed that its speechless voice responded to their mood, and spoke to them even as they longed, or hoped, or feared. To the perturbed and guilty conscience of the priest it seemed that the Christ looked straight towards him—through him even—stern and threatening, so stern and threatening that his own eyes quailed for a moment under the menace. He paused and mopped his brow again. 'It's a risk,' he muttered to himself, 'a terrible risk. If it gets wind, it means ruin. But how can it? Even José suspects nothing! I know him well. If he had, the old fool would not have given up the keys. And who else is there? No one has seen him; he came to my door under the cover of night. Encarnación is deaf and almost blind, and there was no living soul there but myself and him. *Caramba!* What do I fear—a spectre—a bogey?'

At this point, unconsciously to himself, his eyes again sought the Christ, this time with

defiance. 'I want the money, and I *must* have it. After all, they are only a few old hangings mouldering in a corner, but *Viva Dios!* I will bargain like a damned man for them. The old rogue shall pay my price, and every penny of it!' Still those awful eyes were bent straight on his with menacing disapproval. With a resolute gesture he crossed to where the figure was, and drew the curtain. He then stole almost timidly to the end of the aisle, and fitted one of the keys into a lateral door which gave into a lane. The key was not rusty—the sacristan took too much care of it for that—but the lock, being rarely if ever used, was. After several unsuccessful efforts he again mopped his brow, and walked quickly to the sacristy. He looked for some oil. There was none but the consecrated oil contained in the sacred vessels. With this and a quill pen he lubricated the wards of the lock, and again tried the key. This time it entered easily enough. He wrapped his handkerchief around the handle to get more purchase, and after a strong effort it clicked sharply in the lock, and the door was open. From the outer sunlight glided in, like a serpent, the angular form of the old antiquary. The priest carefully relocked the door, assured himself that he had done so, and wiped all traces of the oil from the outside of the lock. In silence the two then walked across the church to the door opening on the spiral staircase which led to the treasure-chamber. There the priest unbarred the heavy shutters, letting in the sunlight in a flood. The golden rays glittered on the knights' armour, lighting up the warriors' faces with an ethereal glow of exultation, thrilled the fair faces of the ladies trailing their long robes through the tall lilies with something of the spiritual, if not the material, glow of life. If all this triumphant movement, this mimicry of action, had surprised him the night before, seen by the flickering of a taper amidst the shadows of night, the fine amber light of morning revealed still more beauties, and details still more marvellous. The antiquary stood and gazed in silence. His face was mute, impassive. Not a twitch of his eye, no movement of the lips betrayed his eagerness, his thoughts, or his desires. For all the priest could gather from it, he might have had before him the countenance of a dead man. 'No,' Baldomero said quietly and impassively, 'not a farthing more than fifty thousand dollars, as I said last night.' The priest's eyes glowed like embers with covetousness. 'Say the double,' he said, 'and you shall have them, the whole lot, those in the chest, and those you see hanging there.'

It would be too long and too nauseous to rehearse the whole of the miserable scene that followed. What seemed, perhaps, only legitimate business to the antiquary, was robbery and sacrilege to the priest. After an hour's long sordid wrangling the bargain was struck; seventy-five thousand dollars to be handed in their integrity, either in metal or bank-notes, to the confidential messenger who carried the tapestries to Madrid. The priest urged caution. It was a business of life and death. On no account should Don Baldomero be seen about in the town again. He must lie hidden in his, the priest's house, until the evening, and leave secretly under the cover of night. Don Tomás himself would make all the arrangements.



'Remember,' he added, 'should this come to the ears of the Duchess or the Bishop of Cuenca, I am a lost man. And not only that, my friend,' he concluded with a cunning twinkle in his eyes, 'but what is worse for you, you would lose your money. You know the law in cases such as these.'

Don Baldomero swore willingly the most absolute, undying secrecy. He felt already in his hands the fifty thousand dollars which was the very least he hoped to net by the transaction. As they passed before the high altar, Don Tomás, still nervous, bade him kneel and swear that 'it shall be kept secret by Him before you,' and Don Baldomero kneeling limply, swore. As the latter disappeared into the sunlit lane by the same lateral door by which he had entered, the priest with his fingers on his lips uttered the one word 'Remember!'

Three days afterwards, Don Tomás, the priest, said as if accidentally to José, the sacristan:

'By the way, those old tapestries in the chapter-room are getting more dilapidated every day. Only to-day I received a letter from the Duchess, and she asks specially about them. Really one ought to do something in the way of getting them cleaned and mended; the Duchess gives me the name of a man in Paris, who cleans things of that sort and makes them as good as new. I think I shall have them packed and sent to him.'

'Without getting the permission of her Grace?' inquired the sacristan apparently naively enough and in all simplicity. An ugly shadow crossed the priest's face. 'Did I not tell you,' he said tartly, 'that her Grace herself gives the address of the person they are to go to. Who would dare to send them away, even for their benefit, without her Grace's permission?' Then more peremptorily, 'You had better get them taken down, so that Simón may take the measurements for the cases. They shall go at once. The last time the women in the town mended them, and a fine botch they made of it! No, no; no more rough darning for me. Wherever they placed their fingers, there you will find an ugly disfigurement.'

Tío José said nothing. He insisted on taking the tapestries down himself. 'Whatever becomes of them,' he muttered, 'they shall have no more ugly rents in them if I can help it.' He himself assisted Simón to fold them, and when they lay, heavy dusty heaps on the chapter-house floor, his heart was heavy as if they had been living things. With angry face and gloomy brow, he watched them one by one as they were piled up in the cases, and Simón nailed up the lids, and then, beside himself with rage and grief, he went to the Duchess of Altrana's steward.

'Well, what is it?' said that worthy, as Tío José stood humbly before him twirling his hat between his trembling fingers. He could not have stood more humbly before the Duchess herself, for the steward was omnipotent in Altrana. It had been the sacristan's intention to ask straight out whether the priest really was acting by her Grace's orders or not. But it was not so easy to do in the presence of this almighty steward as it had been out of it. Nevertheless, he told his story as best he could, how he feared there was something wrong about the tapestries in the church. How a stranger had come about a week ago—here the steward uttered an involuntary exclamation, instantly suppressed—and he, José, like

a fool, had shown him the hangings in the treasure chamber. How, when he had seen them and left the church, he had asked Maria, the tailor's wife, where Don Tomás the cura lived, and if it was far to the parroquia. How next morning, early, Don Tomás sent for the keys of the church, a most unusual thing, for in the whole thirty years or more he had been sacristan of Altrana, he had never asked for the keys before, but always sent for him, José, to open the church. How about four days ago, Don Tomás had said the tapestries were dirty and wanted mending, and that he was going to send them away to Paris de Francia, and thereupon had sent for Simón the carpenter to make the cases for them. How at this very moment the tapestries were all packed and nailed up, and the cases lying in the sacristy.

Señor Don Rufino Perez listened to the sacristan's story with apparently but little interest; when he had finished, he said, with apathetic indifference: 'Don Tomás is a good man. Perhaps he has heard from the Duchess and has received her orders. I cannot say. The Duchess generally writes to him direct when she has any wishes to express about the church. You are making mountains out of molehills, friend José. Fancy putting yourself into such a state for a few old tattered hangings, at most of little value!'

'A few old tattered hangings,' cried Tío José passionately, and in spite of his respect for the great man, he brought his hand with a bang on to the table before him, as if to give added force to his words. 'Why, señor, you must be dreaming. And that to me, José Delgado, who have been sacristan of this church for more than thirty years, as were my father and grandfather before me, may they rest in peace! Those tapestries, sir, are the treasure of Altrana. There are none to be compared to them in Spain; so said my father and grandfather. Ay! señor, I know better than you what they are worth. The bishop, the last time he was here, said that his church only envied Altrana one thing—its tapestries—and that if people knew about them, they would flock to see them as they do in other places, and I might make my fortune showing them.'

'Amigo! Calm yourself,' said the steward, 'calm yourself. I will myself see Don Tomás no later than to-night about them. I am certain everything is right. It is a very ugly accusation to bring against any man, and that man your own priest, that he is selling or sending away, or even capable of selling and sending away, things that belong to the church. And that is what your violence would lead me to infer. Listen to a word of advice, Amigo José; let no breath of what you have said to me just now reach the ears of another living soul, or it will be the worse for you.'

Tío José stood in moody silence. A word from the man before him, and he might lose not only his position in the church, but also the only other means he had of getting a bit of bread to put in his own and his wife's mouth. If he quarrelled with the steward, the latter was quite capable, as he had done before with others, of ousting him from the cherished fields outside the town which he and Tía Maria had cultivated for years by the sweat of their brow.

Tío José had all the Spaniard's caution. 'All I wanted to know, señor,' he muttered at last, 'was whether Don Tomás has your permission to send the tapestries away?'

The steward put his thumbs in the button-holes of his waistcoat, and leaned back in his chair, with a pompous air of satisfaction. He liked the sense of power.

'*Tanto como eso*' (So much as that), he made answer, 'Don Tomás has no permission of mine, but I doubt not the matter is all right. Calm yourself, Amigo José; there is a satisfactory explanation for everything, and be sure that nothing shall happen to harm the interests of the family, so long as I am its representative in Altrana.'

There was nothing for Tío José to do, with that veiled threat still buzzing in his ears, but to beg the steward to keep his secret. The righter of other people's wrongs had met the fate that generally befalls him, and been forced to own himself in the wrong. He retired downcast and crestfallen, but ten times more suspicious and disquieted than he was before. Had he known that barely a quarter of an hour later the steward was closeted with the priest, and could he have heard the words which passed between them as they parted, his worst fears would have been realised.

'*Ea!* Don Tomás, so it's all right, eh? Five thousand dollars for me, and the rest for the benefit of the church.' Here came a snigger, and then the priest's answer, 'Go without care; you shall have the five thousand dollars in your hand within a week from to-day.'

The Duchess of Altrana was in bed, in the hideous conglomeration of brick, stucco, and windows known as a 'chalet' which she had built for herself at Pau. She had just finished breakfast, when her maid brought in her letters.

One after another her Grace opened and tossed them aside. But amongst them was one in a dirty Spanish envelope. It was addressed in the unformed hand of a peasant, but what drew her attention more particularly to it was that she noticed it bore the post-mark of Altrana.

'Some beggar wanting charity, or some more complaints about that rogue Perez,' she exclaimed superciliously as she opened it rather gingerly with a paper-knife.

She skimmed over the first page carelessly enough and without interest. It contained the compliments of the humble addressed to the great and powerful, but when she turned the page and read on, the indifference turned into very real agitation and anxiety. She rang the bell hurriedly and several times. Her maid appeared. 'Bring me some telegraph forms and at once,' she said sharply and with authority. They were brought in a moment, and the French maid wondered what could possibly have happened to drag her mistress from her usual state of supercilious calm. The Duchess read and re-read the letter, and her olive skin grew white and red by turns as she read and re-read. It bore the impress of truth, and was signed by her humble servant, who kissed her feet—José Delgado y Vazquez, Sacristán of her Grace's Collegiate Church of Altrana. Those who ascribed to the Duchess all the graces of a Frenchwoman would have been astounded if they could have heard her mutter between

clenched teeth in her native Spanish: 'Ah! the thieves, ah! the abominable lying thieves, ah! Ladrones, stealers of the Sacraments!'

Simón, the carpenter of Altrana, had been busy all day nailing up the cases which were to carry away the famous tapestries of Altrana, and they had been borne down from the treasure-chamber, and deposited close to the lateral door of the church. Everything was ready. The priest's mule was standing saddled and bridled in the stable underneath his house. A brace of revolvers were concealed beneath his cassock. He was himself to be the confidential messenger to take them to Madrid. Rogues rarely have faith in the integrity of others, and if they have, they are no longer rogues but fools: that was the priest's opinion.

Still in the immense gloom of the dusky aisle which the feeble flame from an oil lamp standing on the pavement made still more immense, still more terrifying, he could not help being strangely perturbed. At times he paced to and fro past the great wooden boxes, at other times he bent his head forward to listen. Simón, at his ease, squatted on one of the cases, smoked cigarettes, spitting on the floor with imperturbable indifference. He was quite prepared to stay there all night if he was paid for it. At last a creaking of wheels woke up the silent lane. The priest opened the side-door. 'Thank God! the carts are there. In ten minutes more all will be safe. In a quarter of an hour they will be creaking along with those great white cases which had been lying like a load on him all day, safely inside, in the silent night to Madrid, and then'—the priest unconsciously clicked his lips.

It took all the united strength of Simón, the muleteers, and the priest himself to lift the heavy cases. The first stuck in the narrow doorway, and the men panted and groaned, and the perspiration rained off the brow of Don Tomás as they tried to extricate it. At last it was deposited in the street. Don Tomás had planned the whole arrangements with unerring foresight. Night had fallen, and it was rarely, if ever, that a passer-by came that way in the daytime, much less at night, for it was an uncanny place and grim with the legend of a fearful murder that had been committed there long ago.

The muleteers paused beside their burden for a moment's breathing space ere they shouldered it into the cart, when a stentorian voice raised the echoes of the silent lane.

'*En el nombre de la ley!*' (In the name of the law!). One of the muleteers took to his heels and fled. None of the carts belonged to him. Besides, he was a *padre de familias*, and had certain unpleasant reminiscences of certain other *démêlés* he had had with the law before. The rest remained motionless, their faces transfixed in blank, open-mouthed astonishment. Looming out of the darkness appeared the figure of the Alcalde bearing his insignia of office, the gold-headed wand and tassels, with an assumption of more importance and dignity than he had ever made before. Behind him was his bodyguard, the municipality of the town, and they again were followed by a crowd of men, women, and children.

The priest stood in the doorway irresolute. He, too, like the hireling muleteer, would have

fled, but fear sealed his footsteps. His face was livid.

'What is this?' the Alcalde inquired gravely. 'What is this, and what contraband goods, in the name of God, are leaving our church of Altrana this night? Honest men work in the daytime and openly. Here, you,' turning to the muleteers, 'take this case into the church again. If you can't do it yourselves, I myself will lend you a hand.' Here every member of the municipality pushed forward, and behind them, with ringing cheers and indescribable shouts, the mob. For once in his life and term of office the Alcalde became a popular hero!

'Now, Señor Cura,' he said, 'a few words with you. With all respect, I am commanded by superior orders that I cannot evade to open these cases.' The Alcalde looked at the cura significantly, and a twinkle shone in the eyes which gleamed out of his stolid face, which might have been cut out of brown mahogany. Then taking him by the arm they paced together down the aisle. 'Señor Cura,' he said when they had got out of earshot, 'Señor Cura, I wish to be well with all men, more especially with you, for whom I have a profound respect. It has got wind in the town that the tapestries, the famous tapestries from the treasure-chamber, are in those cases, but I do not believe all I hear. To-night the people were on the eve of a revolution. It has taken all my authority to prevent them assailing the church doors to see if their tapestries were safe. If they had, there would have been bloodshed. They are particularly violent against you' (the priest became as pale as death). 'Now, Señor Cura, listen to me. My orders (but they must be obeyed; there is no evading them) are to take an exact inventory of all the jewels, tapestries, and relics of this church, and to see that none are missing. I am, at the same time, strictly enjoined to avoid all unnecessary scandal. Now, I do not know what is in those cases. Listen, it is late' (here he took out his watch, and pointed to the hands with a tobacco-stained finger). 'Send the carts away under any pretext, lock the church doors, and whatever is in those cases' (here he made an elaborate and exquisite gesture of deprecation and apology) 'have them unpacked by the first light to-morrow, for to-morrow, according to my formal orders, I must take the inventory of the church treasures, *y tan amigos*' (as great friends as ever). 'In the meantime, I will persuade the people to go quietly home, which they will do when I tell them that I have seen their tapestries mouldering away on the walls of the treasure-chamber just as they always were.'

When the wheels of the carts had creaked down the lane, leaving it to silence, the Alcalde saluted the priest, and swept the ground with his hat.

'Good-night, Señor Cura, until to-morrow,' and as the priest locked the church door upon his receding figure, he muttered low to the Duchess's steward, who was one of the municipality's chief lights, '*Que demonio!*' (What a rogue!) 'These Levites would give points to the very devil.'

On the morrow, when he took the inventory of the church, the Alcalde gravely ticked off the tapestries of the treasure-chamber, and not so much as a movement of his face indicated that he was surprised to find them in their accustomed

place. On the contrary, with great urbanity and politeness, he continued his inventory of the rest of the treasures in the sacristy, and complimented the priest on their careful conservation.

### SOME BIRDS AND THEIR WAYS.

It is somewhat curious and interesting to think that in ancient times affairs of importance, either of public or private concern, were seldom undertaken without first consulting the movements of feathered bipeds. From Hesiod we gather that in his day (eight or nine centuries before Christ) Greek husbandry and agricultural operations were almost entirely regulated by means of observations taken from the chattering, singing, feeding, and flight of birds. But it was amongst the Romans that the art of prognosticating future events by the agency of feathered animals was made into a system, and the superstitious belief in the foreknowledge of birds of the air was so unhesitating that those to whom it was given to understand their oracles held a very important place in the Roman state. However absurd such an institution as a college of augurs would appear in our eyes, yet, like all other institutions, it had in some degree its origin from nature. When men considered the wonderful migration of birds, how they disappeared at certain seasons of the year and appeared again at stated times, and could give no guess where they went, it was almost natural for the ignorant and credulous to suppose that they retired somewhere out of the sphere of this earth, and perhaps approached the ethereal regions, where they might converse with the gods and thus acquire the gift of predicting future events. Add to this the disposition of some birds to imitate the human voice, their power of mimicry and imitation of peculiar sounds, and the mysterious instinct and intelligence so often noticed in many varieties of the feathered creation. Many savage peoples all over the world—Kalmucks, Malays, Polynesians, Calabar negroes, Brazilian Indians—still regulate their proceedings by the flight of birds to right or left, the motions of hawks, the hooting of an owl, or the not more melodious cry of the great kingfisher. And amongst ourselves there are even yet not a few who count with some misgivings the precise number of magpies in view—one, two, three, or four.

Some illustrations of the curious faculties and habits of some birds will perhaps help us more clearly to understand how such fanciful notions might easily and naturally originate in the minds of superstitious people. The 'piping crow' is named from its ready mimicry of other birds; whilst its imitation of the cackling of a hen and the crowing of a cock is almost perfect. On the northern coasts of Ireland may occasionally be noticed hundreds of crows feeding on mussels and crabs, which they gather from the rocks and, curious to say, drop from a height of sixty to one hundred and twenty feet on the hard stone beneath, in order to break the shells. The crafty and thievish habits of the crow are well known. In the twenty-fourth year of Henry VIII. an act was passed to promote the destruction of this par-

ticular species on account of its alleged malicious and destructive powers. How the unhappy bird managed to survive the storm is a mystery, but weather it he did, as there are now more crows in Britain than in any other European country.

Among other birds possessing wonderful powers of imitation may be mentioned the bullfinch, which learns to whistle tunes, to sing in parts, and even pronounce words distinctly; the Chinese starling, which imitates words and musical sounds; and the great-billed butcher bird of Australia, which imitates the notes of some other birds, and thus decoys them to their destruction.

The mischievousness and cunning of the magpie is proverbial. There is a story told of a tame magpie which was seen busily employed in a garden gathering pebbles, and, with much solemnity and a studied air, dropping them into a hole about eighteen inches deep, made to receive a post. After dropping each stone, it cried 'Currack!' triumphantly, and set off for another. On examining the spot, a poor toad was found in the hole, which the magpie was stoning for his amusement. We are told by Linnaeus that the martin dwells on the outside of houses in Europe, under the eaves; and that when it has built its nest, the sparrow frequently takes possession of it. The martin, unable to dislodge his enemy, convokes his companions, some of whom guard the captive, while others bring clay with which they completely close up the entrance of the nest; they then fly away, leaving the sparrow to be suffocated or starved to death.

For some years the writer occupied a cottage near Esher. Under the trellised porch was a martin's nest, which had been repaired every season for at least three years, and from which a brood of four or five young birds took their flight year by year. The porch was covered with zinc, and the nest was built against the wall, close against the angle formed by the slanting sides of the roof. One morning, before the brood was hatched, one of the old birds was found in the porch dead, owing probably to the unusual heat of the sun shining upon the zinc covering, which was only a few inches above the nest. Opposite the porch, and separated from it by the width of the garden walk, was an arch of wire covered with roses and honeysuckles. About eleven o'clock on the morning of the day when the bird had been found dead, the writer's attention was attracted by an unusual twittering, and looking towards the porch, he observed a martin, which he presumed to be the male bird, flying in and out of the porch on to the arch, and evidently endeavouring to coax another bird into his snug quarters. After a while the second martin took several short flights, and dived under the porch along with her companion, who twittered and flew round her in a state of the greatest excitement. This continued for about half-an-hour, until the stranger took possession of the nest, where she finally hatched the brood.

The following anecdote, communicated by Mr R. Ball to the author of Thomson's *Irish Birds*, is a curious illustration of the remark-

able sagacity of the raven. A tame raven, kept by some schoolboys, was very attentive in watching their cribs or bird-traps, and when a bird was taken, the raven endeavoured to catch it by turning back the top of the trap with its beak; but in so doing the bird always escaped, as the raven could not let go the crib in time to seize it. After several vain attempts of this kind, the raven, seeing another bird caught, instead of going at once to the trap, went to another tame raven, and induced it to accompany him. When the second raven lifted up the crib, the other bore the poor captive off in triumph.

There is a very remarkable cockatoo found in one of the islands of the Indian Ocean, near New Guinea; it is as large as a full-grown pheasant, and of a jet black colour. The bird is distinguished for its immensely strong bill, and the clever manner in which it uses this tool. The bill seems as hard as steel, and the upper part has a deep notch in it. Now the favourite food of this cockatoo is the kernel of the canary-nut; but there is wonderful ingenuity required to get at it; for the nut is something like a Brazil nut, only ten times as hard. In fact, it requires the blow of a heavy hammer to crack it; it is quite smooth and triangular in shape. The cockatoo might throw the nut down, but it would not break, or it might hold it in its claws as parrots usually do with their food, and attempt to crush it; but the smoothness of the nut would cause it to fly out of the beak. Nature, however, appears to have given the possessor of the wonderful bill an almost miraculous intelligence to direct its powers; for the cockatoo takes one of the nuts edgewise in its bill, and by a sawing motion of its sharp lower mandible makes a small notch on it. This done, the bird takes hold of the nut with its claws, and biting off a piece of leaf, retains it in the deep notch of the upper part of the bill. Then the nut is seized between the upper and lower parts of the bill and is prevented slipping by the peculiar texture of the leaf. A sharp nip or two in the notch breaks off a tiny piece of the shell of the nut. The bird then seizes the nut in its claws and pokes the long sharp point of its bill into the hole, and picks out the kernel bit by bit. The cockatoo has a very long tongue, which collects each morsel as it is broken off by the bill. This is without doubt a wonderful process, for it is quite clear that without the leaf nothing can be done, and it proves how certain structures in birds are made to destroy certain parts of plants.

A bird most highly esteemed in Egypt and other Eastern countries is the vulture; in some places stringent laws protect this unsightly creature, and heavy penalties await its assailant. In England we pay scavengers to cleanse our towns, and the police indict the man who encumbers the footpath with putrid matter. The vulture saves all this trouble; he, considerate bird, stoops from his aerial height to become the purifier of cities. He is more effective than a whole college of physicians and a board of health; for he prefers carrion to fresh meat; and putrid substances which would quickly taint the air are borne off by the vulture the instant any offal



or offensive matter is thrown into the street. The birds descend in crowds, and the nuisance is at once removed. In warm climates the vultures may be observed soaring high in air, and circling over a city on the watch, and no prey, however small, escapes their observation. In some parts of America vast quantities of large animals are killed for their hides only; there naturally the keen-eyed vultures descend, and quickly leave nothing of the largest buffalo save the bones, thus thoroughly and expeditiously removing so prolific a source of pestilence.

Among the numerous birds in Ceylon there are few more remarkable than the 'Virginian horned owl.' As soon as evening draws on, and mankind retire to rest, he sends forth such sounds as seem scarcely to belong to this world, 'making night hideous' with his loud and sudden cries of 'Waugh O, Waugh O.' He has other nocturnal solos, no less melodious, one of which very strikingly resembles the half-suppressed scream of a person suffocating or throttled. The Kandyans consider the cry of this owl as a presage of death or misfortune, unless they adopt a charm to avert its fatal summons.

Humboldt describes a visit to the Caripe valley in Venezuela, and gives an interesting account of the 'guacharo' birds which make their home in a celebrated cavern of enormous size, and are reputed, by the natives, to possess infernal powers. The cavern was represented as of fathomless dimensions, and in its gloomy depths are supposed to roam the spirits of departed ancestors. The birds are about the size of our common fowl, but having wings expanding to three and a half feet. As the traveller approaches the cave the hoarse cries of the guacharo birds begin to make themselves heard, and, on his proceeding a little way into the interior, the noise is perfectly terrific—thousands of the birds uttering their piercing cries simultaneously. These screams echo and re-echo from the surrounding walls, and when it is remembered that the place is in pitchy darkness, it will be easy to understand the superstitious terrors which the Indians associate with its ghostly inmates, who dwell all day long in the cavern, and only come forth like the owls at the witching hour of night. In fact, the natives stand in such awe of these birds that nothing will induce the ordinary Indian to advance beyond a short distance into the cave. They maintain that the guacharos have daily intercourse with the bad spirit, and are the living embodiment of everything that is hateful and wicked. Yet this bird, though sufficiently curious, is as innocent of such evil communications as any other, and is in fact a harmless frugivorous fowl, chiefly remarkable for the preternatural fatness of the young birds. The parent birds live mainly on oily nuts, and the young are so ridiculously fat that once a year the Indians brave the terrors of the dark caverns to capture and slaughter for their oil these little lumps of fat. The small creatures are melted into grease over fires at the mouth of the caves; and the oil, gathered into pats, will keep for years, and is used both for cooking and for lamps. The guacharo is now known to inhabit Ecuador, Colombia, and Trinidad (where it is prized for the table). It is now frequently called

Oil-bird—technically *Steatornis*; and in its nocturnal habits and some other features (though not in its nut-eating) it resembles the goatsucker.

In striking contrast to the bird of ill omen thus described by Humboldt is the gorgeous bird of paradise. As an ornament of beauty and grace, the bird of the sun—or bird of God, as it is sometimes called by the people of Ternate—stands unrivalled, and no bird has given rise to more romantic and fabulous tales; such, for instance, as the ridiculous assertion that the bird of paradise lives all its life long on the wing and in the air, and is born without legs. The natives of Gilolo and New Guinea have a curious custom of cutting off the legs of all dead birds of paradise offered for sale or barter, and this may have given rise to the legend as to the bird being without legs. The true reason, however, for this peculiar operation is that the birds are supposed to be much better preserved, and the natives are also enabled to more easily wear them as ornaments to their helmets in mock-battles.

## AT THE RISING OF THE WATERS.

By JOHN BUCHAN.

IN mid September the moors are changing from red to a dusky brown, as the fire of the heather wanes, and the long grass yellows with advancing autumn. Then, too, the rain falls heavily on the hills, and vexes the shallow, upland streams, till every glen is ribbed with its churning torrent. This for the uplands; but below, at the rim of the plains, where the glens expand to vales, and trim fields edge the wastes, there is wreck and lamentation. The cabined waters lip over cornland and meadow, and bear destruction to crop and cattle.

This is the tale of Robert Linklater, farmer in Clachlands, and the events which befell him on the night of September 20th, in the year of grace 1880. I am aware that there are characters in the countryside which stand higher in repute than his, for imagination and a love of point and completeness in a story are qualities which little commend themselves to the prosaic. I have heard him called 'Leein' Rob,' and answer to the same with cheerfulness; but he was wont in private to brag of minutest truthfulness, and attribute his ill name to the universal dullness of man.

On this evening he came home, by his own account, from market about the hour of six. He had had a week of festivity. On the Monday he had gone to a distant cattle-show, and on Tuesday to a marriage. On the Wednesday he had attended upon a cousin's funeral, and, being flown with whisky, brought everlasting disgrace upon himself by rising to propose the health of the bride and bridegroom. On Thursday he had been at the market of Gledsmuir, and, getting two shillings more for his ewes than he had reckoned, returned in a fine fervour of spirit and ripe hilarity.

The weather had been shower and blast for days. The gray skies dissolved in dreary rain, and on that very morn there had come a down-pour so fierce that the highways ran like a hill-side torrent. Now, as he sat at supper and looked

down at the green vale and red waters leaping by bank and brae, a sudden fear came to his heart. Hitherto he had had no concern—for was not his harvest safely inned? But now he minds of the laigh parks and the nowt beasts there, which he had bought the week before at the sale of Inverforth. They were Kyloe and Galloway mixed, and on them, when fattened through winter and spring, lay great hopes of profit. He gulped his meal down hurriedly, and went forthwith to the garden-foot. There he saw something that did not allay his fears. Gled had split itself in two, at the place where Clachlands water came to swell its flow, and a long, gleaming line of black current stole round by the side of the laigh meadow, where stood the huddled cattle. Let but the waters rise a little, and the valley would be one uniform, turgid sea.

This was pleasing news for an honest man after a hard day's work, and the farmer went grumbling back. He took a mighty plaid and flung it over his shoulders, chose the largest and toughest of his many sticks, and set off to see wherein he could better the peril.

Now, some hundreds of yards above the laigh meadow, a crazy wooden bridge spanned the stream. By this way he might bring his beasts to safety, for no nowt could hope to swim the red flood. So he plashed through the dripping stubble to the river's brink, where, with tawny swirl, it licked the edge of banks which in summer weather stood high and flower-decked. Ruefully he reflected that many good palings would by this time be whirling to a distant sea.

When he came to the wooden bridge he set his teeth manfully and crossed. It creaked and swayed with his weight, and dipped till it all but touched the flow. It could not stand even as the water was, for already its mid prop had lurched forward, like a drunken man, and was groaning at each wave. But if a rise came, it would be torn from its foundations like a reed, and then heigh-ho! for cattle and man.

With painful haste he laboured through the shallows which rimmed the haughlands, and came to the snake-like current which had even now spread itself beyond the laigh meadow. He measured its depth with his eye and ventured. It did not reach beyond his middle, but its force gave him much ado to keep his feet. At length it was passed, and he stood triumphant on the spongy land, where the cattle huddled in mute discomfort and terror.

Darkness was falling, and he could scarcely see the homestead on the affronting hillside. So with all speed he set about collecting the shivering beasts, and forcing them through the ring of water to the bridge. Up to their flanks they went, and then stood lowing helplessly. He saw that something was wrong, and made to ford the current himself. But now it was beyond him. He looked down at the yellow water running round his middle, and saw that it had risen, and was rising inch by inch with every minute. Then he glanced to where aforetime stood the crazy planking of the bridge. Suddenly hope and complacency fled, and the gravest fear settled in his heart; for he saw no bridge, only a ragged, saw-like end of timber where once he had crossed.

Here was a plight for a solitary man to be in at nightfall. There would be no wooden bridge on all the water, and the nearest one of stone was at distant Gledsmuir, over some score of miles of weary moorland. It was clear that his cattle must bide on this farther bank, and he himself, when once he had seen them in safety, would set off for the nearest farm and pass the night. It seemed the craziest of matters, that he should be thus in peril and discomfort, with the lights of his house blinking not a quarter mile away.

Once more he tried to break the water-ring and once more he failed. The flood was still rising and the space of green which showed gray and black beneath a fitful moon was quickly lessening. Before, irritation had been his upper feeling, now terror succeeded. He could not swim a stroke, and if the field were covered he would drown like a cat in a bag. He lifted up his voice and roared with all the strength of his mighty lungs, 'Sammlle,' 'Andra,' 'Jock,' 'come and help's,' till the place rang with echoes. Meantime with strained eyes he watched the rise of the cruel water, which crept, black and pitiless, over the shadowy gray.

He drove the beasts to a little knoll which stood somewhat above the meadow, and there they stood, cattle and man, in the fellowship of misfortune. They had been as wild as peat-reek, and had suffered none to approach them, but now with some instinct of peril they stood quietly by his side, turning great billowy foreheads to the surging waste. Upward and nearer came the current, rising with steady gurgling which told of great storms in his hills and roaring torrents in every gorge. Now the sound grew louder and seemed almost at his feet, now it ceased and nought was heard save the dull hum of the main stream pouring its choking floods to the sea. Suddenly his eyes wandered to the lights of his house and the wide slope beyond, and for a second he mused on some alien trifle. Then he was brought to himself with a pull as he looked and saw a line of black water not three feet from the farthest beast. His heart stood still, and with awe he reflected that in half-an-hour by this rate of rising he would be with his Maker.

For five minutes he waited, scarce daring to look around him, but dreading each instant to feel a cold wave lick his boot. Then he glanced timorously, and to his joy it was scarce an inch higher. It was stopping, and he might yet be safe. With renewed energy he cried out for aid, till the very cattle started at the sound and moved uneasily among themselves.

In a little there came an answering voice across the dark, 'Whae's in the laigh meedy?' and it was the voice of the herd of Clachlands, sounding hoarse through the driving of the stream.

'It's me,' went back the mournful response.

'And whae are ye?' came the sepulchral voice.

'Your ain maister, William Smail, forwandered among water and nowt beast.'

For some time there was no reply, since the shepherd was engaged in a severe mental struggle; with the readiness of his class he went straight to the heart of the peril, and mentally reviewed the ways and waters of the land. Then he calmly accepted the hopelessness of it all, and cried loudly through the void:

'There's nae way for't but juist to bide where

ye are. The water's stoppit, and gin mornin' we'll get ye aff. I'll send a laddie down to the Dow Pule to bring up a boat in a cairt. But that's a lang gait, and it'll be a sair job gettin' it up, and I mislout it'll be daylight or he comes. But hand up your hert, and we'll get ye oot. Are the beasts a' richt?"

'A' richt, William; but, 'od man! their maister is cauld. Could ye no fling something over?'

'No when there's twae hunner yairds o' deep water atween.'

'Then, William, ye mann licht a fire, a great muckle roarin' fire, juist fornenst me. It'll cheer me to see the licht o' t.'

The shepherd did as he was bid, and for many minutes the farmer could hear the noise of men heaping wood, in the pauses of wind and through the thicker murmur of the water. Then a glare shot up, and revealed the dusky forms of the four serving-men straining their eyes across the channel. The gleam lit up a yard of water by the other bank, but all midway was inky shadow. It was about eight o'clock, and the moon was just arisen. The air had coldened and a light chill wind rose from the river.

The farmer of Clachlands, standing among shivering and dripping oxen, himself wet to the skin and cold as a stone, with no wrapping save his plaid and no outlook save a black moving water and a gleam of fire—in such a position, the farmer of Clachlands collected his thoughts and mustered his resolution. His first consideration was the safety of his stock. The effort gave him comfort. His crops were in, and he could lose nothing there; his sheep were far removed from scaith, and his cattle would survive the night with ease, if the water kept its level. With some satisfaction he reflected that the only care he need have in the matter was for his own bodily comfort in an autumn night. This was serious, yet not deadly, for the farmer was a man of many toils and cared little for the rigours of weather. But he would gladly have given the price of a beast for a bottle of whisky to comfort himself in this emergency.

He stood on a knuckle of green land some twenty feet long, with a crowd of cattle pressing around him and a little forest of horns showing faintly. There was warmth in these great shaggy hides if they had not been drenched and icy from long standing. His fingers were soon as numb as his feet, and it was in vain that he stamped on the plashy grass or wrapped his hands in a fold of plaid. There was no doubt in the matter. He was keenly uncomfortable, and the growing chill of night would not mend his condition.

Some ray of comfort was to be got from the sight of the crackling fire. There at least was homely warmth, and light, and ease. With gusto he conjured up all the delights of the past week, the roaring evenings in market ale-house and the fragrance of good drink and piping food. Necessity sharpened his fancy, and he could almost feel the flavour of tobacco. A sudden hope took him. He clapped hand to pocket and pulled forth pipe and shag. Hang it! He had left his match-box on the chimney-top in his kitchen, and there was an end to his only chance of comfort.

So in all cold and damp he set himself to pass the night in the midst of that ceaseless swirl of

black moss water. Even as he looked at the dancing glimmer of fire, the moon broke forth silent and full, and lit the vale with misty glamour. The great hills, whence came the Gled, shone blue and high with fleecy trails of vapour drifting athwart them. He saw clearly the walls of his dwelling, the light shining from the window, the struggling fire on the bank, and the dark forms of men. Its transient flashes on the waves were scarce seen in the broad belt of moonshine which girdled the valley. And around him, before and behind, rolled the unending desert waters with that heavy resolute flow which one who knows the floods fears a thousandfold more than the boisterous stir of a torrent.

And so he stood till maybe one o'clock of the morning, cold to the bone, and awed by the eternal silence, which choked him, despite the myriad noises of the night. For there are few things more awful than the calm of nature in her madness—the stillness which follows a snow-slip or the monotony of a great flood. By this hour he was falling from his first high confidence. His knees stooped under him, and he was fain to lean upon the beasts at his side. His shoulders ached with the wet, and his eyes grew sore with the sight of yellow glare and remote distance.

From this point I shall tell his tale in his own words, as he has told it me, but stripped of its garnishing and detail. For it were vain to translate Lallan into orthodox speech, when the very salt of the night air clings to the Scots as it did to that queer tale.

'The mune had been lang out,' he said, 'and I had grown weary o' her blinkin'. I was as cauld as death and as wat as the sea, no to speak o' haein' the rheumatics in my back. The nowt were glowrin' and glunchin', rubbin'heid to heid, and whiles stampin' on my tae's wi' their cloven hooves. But I was mortal glad o' the beasts' company, for I think I wad hae gane daft mysel in that muckle dowie water. Whiles I thoct it was risin', and then my hert stood still; an whiles fa'in', and then it loupit wi' joy. But it keepit geyan near the bit, and aye as I heard it lip-lappin' I prayed the Lord to keep it whaur it was.'

'About half-past yin in the mornin', as I saw by my watch, I got sleepy, and but for the nowt steerin', I micht hae drappit aff. Syne I begood to watch the water, and it was rale interestin', for a' sort o' queer things were comin' down. I could see bits o' brigs and palin's wi'oot end dippin' in the tide, and whiles swirlin' in sae near that I could hae grippit them. Then beasts began to come by, whiles upside down, whiles soomin' brawly, sheep and stirks frae the farms up the water. I got graund amusement for a wee while watchin' them, and notin' the marks on their necks.'

"That's Clachlands Mains," says I, "and that's Nether Fallo, and the Back o' the Muneraw. Gudesake, sic a spate it maun hae been up the muirs to work siccan a destruction!" I keepit coont o' the stock, and feegured to mysel what the farmer-bodies wad lose. The thoct that I wad keep a' my ain was some kind o' comfort.

'But about the hour o' twae the mune cloudit ower, and I saw nae mair than twenty feet afore me. I got awesome cauld, and a sort o' stound o' fricht took me, as I lookit into that black, unholy

water. The nowt shivered sair and drappit their heids, and the fire on the ither side seemed to gang out a' of a sudden, and leave the hale glen thick wi' nicht. I shivered mysel wi' something mair than the snell air, and there and then I wad hae gien the price o' fower stirks for my ain bed at hame.

'It was as quiet as a kirkyaird, for suddenly the roar o' the water stoppit, and the stream lay still as a loch. Then I heard a queer lappin' as o' something floatin' down, and it sounded miles aff in that dreidfu' silence. I listened wi' een stertin', and aye it cam' nearer and nearer, wi' a sound like a dowg soomin' a burn. It was sae black, I could see nocht, but somewhere frae the edge o' a cloud, a thin ray o' licht drappit on the water, and there, soomin' down by me, I saw something that lookit like a man.

'My hert was burstin' wi' terror, but, thinks I, here's a droonin' body, and I maun try and save it. So I waded in as far as I daured, though my feet were sae cauld that they bowed aneath me.

'Ahint me I heard a splashin' and fechtin', and then I saw the nowt, fair wild wi' fricht, standin' in the water on the ither side o' the green bit, and lookin' wi' muckle feared een at something in the water afore me.

'Doun the thing came, and aye I got cauldier as I looked. Then it was by my side, and I claught at it and pu'd it after me on to the land.

'I heard anither splash. The nowt gaed farther into the water, and stood shakin' like young birks in a storm.

'I got the thing upon the green bank and turned it ower. It was a drooned man' wi' his hair hingin' back on his broo, and his mouth wide open. But first I saw his een, which glowered like scrapit lead out o' his clay-cauld face, and had in them a' the fear o' death and hell which follows after.

'The next moment I was up to my waist among the nowt, fechtin' in the water aside them, and snowkin' into their wet backs to hide mysel like a feared bairn.

'Maybe half an 'oor I stood, and then my mind returned to me. I misca'ed mysel for a fule and a coward. And my legs were sae numb, and my strength sae far gane, that I kened fine that I couldna lang thole to stand this way like a heron in the water.

'I lookit round, and then turned again wi' a stert, for there were thae leaden een o' that awfu' deid thing staring at me still.

'For anither quarter-hour I stood and shivered, and then my guid sense returned, and I tried again. I walkit backward, never lookin' round, through the water to the shore, whaur I thoct the corp was lyin'. And a' the time I could hear my hert chokin' in my breist.

'My God, I fell ower it, and for one moment lay aside it, wi' my heid touchin' its deathly skin. Then wi' a skelloch like a daft man, I took the thing in my airms and flung it wi' a' my strength into the water. The swirl took it, and it dipped and swam like a fish till it gaed out o' sight.

'I sat doun on the grass and grat like a bairn wi' fair horror and weakness. Yin by yin the nowt came back, and shlותרed anither around

me, and the puir beasts brocht me yince mair to mysel. But I keepit my een on the grund, and thoct o' hame and a' thing decent and kindly, for I daurna for my life look out to the black water in dreid o' what it micht bring.

'At the first licht, the herd and twae ither men cam' ower in a boat to tak me aff and bring fodder for the beasts. They fand me still sittin' wi' my heid atween my knees, and my face like a peeled wand. They lifted me intil the boat and rowed me ower, driftin' far down wi' the angry current. At the ither side the shepherd says to me in an awed voice :

"There's a fearfu' thing happened. The young laird o' Manorwater's drooned in the spate. He was ridin' back late and tried the ford o' the Cauldshaw foot. Ye ken his wild cantrips, but there's an end o' them noo. The horse cam' hame in the nicht wi' an empty saddle, and the Gled water rinnin' frae him in streams. The corp'll be far on to the sea by this time, and they'll never see't mair."

"I ken," I cried wi' a dry throat, "I ken; I saw him floatin' by." And then I broke yince mair into a silly greetin', while the men watched me as if they thoct I was out o' my mind ?

So much the farmer of Clachlands told me, but to the countryside he repeated merely the bare facts of weariness and discomfort. I have heard that he was accosted a week later by the minister of the place, a well-intentioned, phrasing man, who had strayed from his native city with its familiar air of tea and temperance to those stony uplands.

'And what thoughts had you, Mr Linklater, in that awful position ? Had you no serious reflection upon your life ?'

'Me,' said the farmer ; 'no me. I juist was thinkin' that it was dooms cauld, and that I wad hae gien a guid deal for a pipe o' tobaccy.' This in the racy, careless tone of one to whom such incidents were the merest child's-play.

#### 'NEATH RADIANT SKIES.

TRANSFORMED are all the city streets to-day

On which the gracious sunbeams pour their gold ;

Soft airs prevail ; my window-box is gay

With buds that push bright heads above the mould.

Oh, somewhere in the country, far away,

I know the dim blue hyacinths unfold,

And daisies gleam, and perfumed breezes stray

Across the silver mere and grassy wold.

The cuckoo's voice is heard from wood and brake ;

Glad warblers twitter in the leafy sedge ;

The starry wind-flowers tremble as they make

A milky-way below the verdant hedge.

And while my little cage-bird sings and sings

His passionate song from dawn to twilight gray,

I almost hear the whirr of free brown wings

Against the greenness of the roadside spray.

The world is young ; the world will ne'er grow old—

Or do I look at things with clearer eyes

Because sweet hopes that drooped amidst the cold

Bloom out afresh beneath Spring's radiant skies ?

E. MATHESON.

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